

Where Next

All the activity has been made possible by funding through the farm health planning initiative. We are still happy to consider approaches from veterinary practices and groups of producers to develop farm health planning further in your area.

Are you interested in:

- Using diagnostics to help solve health problems
- Getting groups of producers together to discuss pig health
- Exploring innovative ways of tackling health planning on pig units

If yes, then please visit www.bpex.org.uk or www.defra.gov.uk/fhp for more information.

Alternatively, please contact Ian Russell on **07795 335836**

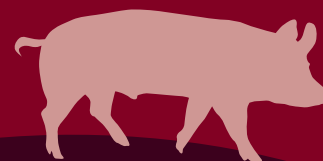
Farm Health Planning

How it can help you

Disease costs the pig industry millions of pounds each year through mortality and poor performance which in turn hamper daily weight gain and feed conversion efficiency. With the high price of feed, active health planning can help ease the pain of this for producers.

The pig industry is taking the lead in embracing the Farm Health Planning Initiative - Defra funded but industry run - through forming self-help producer groups to improve pig health and the health of producers' finances.

This leaflet provides some examples of how the self-help producer groups across England are developing Farm Health Planning.



Setting Targets

In Yorkshire, a traditional heartland of farrow to finish production, a group of like-minded producers meets every two months to discuss health performance. The meetings focus on one part of the production process, such as the service house, and then using expert veterinary input find ways to overcome any problems and improve existing procedures.

Results prove that it works - since meeting, the key performance indicators such as farrowing rates and pigs weaned per sow have improved. Targets are being set to get the group average within the top 10% in the country.



Testing times

Sudden death in finishers is always a worry on pig units, costing the producers in lost profit. In Cornwall, producers, at the recommendation of their vet, are sending late stage finishers that die suddenly in for post-mortems. The vet will then pool the results to see if there are trends in the causes of death between the different units. A plan of action will then be created by the vet and producers to help reduce mortality.

At a meeting the vet ran through the likely causes of sudden death, such as; gastric torsion, heart problems, clostridia disease, strep suis and stress-related causes from heat, water deprivation and riding, and then ways to minimise their impact.

Seeing is believing

Meetings are all well and good, but for some producers getting to know what is going on inside the pig is a great way of understanding the pig's health needs – and getting producers into active management of health issues.

A group of stockmen in East Anglia is doing just that, by watching post-mortem demonstrations being carried out by a vet. By doing this, the vet will be able to explain what has caused the mortality and then, using health planning, reduce the risk of it happening again.



Diagnosis

There are currently good tools available for testing and diagnosing a large range of disease on pig units, but for some diseases it can be more difficult to assess at what stage of the life cycle of the pig that infection takes hold. Using an in-depth blood testing regime, a number of units across the country are testing for diseases such as ileitis and APP to ascertain this. Management of the disease can then be made more effective. Results of these tests will be available in due course for discussion within the self-help producer groups. The ileitis groups will be nationwide and consist of up to 100 producers.



Helping each other

Producers in Yorkshire are meeting every couple of months with their vet to discuss the health of sows and finishers. Members of the group are allocated a task, which is then discussed at the next meeting. For example, the producer with the highest farrowing rate is going to bring in photos of his farrowing house and give a 'virtual tour' to the group.

The group is also encouraging young members of staff to participate. This is

ensuring that all those that have a role in the production process can benefit and it also helps to improve staff development.



Understanding the tools available

Although many producers have farm health plans, members of staff may not fully appreciate their worth. Producers in the East of England will shortly be having sessions for their staff where a vet will explain a health plan and how it relates to the pigs.

Many producers are members of schemes such as the British Pig Health Scheme, but many don't understand fully the implications of the results. Groups across England will be having an 'understanding my BPHS score' session, again using a vet to go through the results and explain how disease scores affect the performance of the pig. Using data from the BPHS can help demonstrate to producers that changes can be made that help to have a positive improvement on pig health.